

VZCZCXRO8993
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPS #0014/01 0101806
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 101806Z JAN 08
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7901
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1367
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RHFMISS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000014

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR, EUR/SCE, DRL, INL, AND S/WCI, NSC FOR BRAUN,
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER, OPDAT
FOR ACKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UNMIK](#) [KV](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO BIO: ASSEMBLY SPEAKER JAKUP KRASNIQI

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) Secretary General Jakup Krasniqi is the new speaker of the Kosovo Assembly following his party's victory in the November 17 elections and approval by the Assembly on January 9. A former history teacher, political prisoner and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) spokesman, the 57-year old Krasniqi brings with him a record of provocative political conduct and strident nationalist rhetoric. His experience and position within the party has given Krasniqi great influence, and he has not shied away from occasionally opposing PDK leader and incoming PM Hashim Thaci on major political issues. Despite Krasniqi's penchant for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, he was a productive member of the Unity Team's lower-level Strategic-Political Group; USOP has maintained good relations with him, and he for the most part listens to our advice. END SUMMARY.

KLA'S FACE TO THE WORLD

¶2. (C) Krasniqi began his political activity in the Kosovo Albanian clandestine movement in the 1970s while a history teacher in his hometown of Gllogovc, central Kosovo. He was arrested as a participant in the 1981 demonstrations aimed at gaining republic status for Kosovo in the former Yugoslav federation, and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. After his release in 1991, he joined the newly-formed Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and later became Gllogovc branch president and General Council member. In parallel, Krasniqi maintained close ties with the leadership of the nascent Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the Drenica area, namely with Azem Sylja and Hashim Thaci. Krasniqi left the LDK for good in March 1998 to join the KLA.

¶3. (C) Krasniqi became the KLA's face to the world in June 1998 after being appointed spokesman for the KLA General Staff, whose members maintained anonymity at the time. He was also appointed to the KLA political directorate in August 1998, and participated at the Rambouillet talks in France in February 1999. Due to his reported constructive role in bridging internal differences, the disparate Kosovo Albanian delegation unofficially nominated Krasniqi for the post of Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Kosovo

(PGOK), agreed then between the leaders of the delegation. Nevertheless, Krasniqi's stature was not sufficiently high to thwart the ambitions of KLA Political Director Hashim Thaci, who was eventually given the post. Following Rambouillet, Krasniqi went to Albania, where in April 1999 he was initially appointed spokesman and later Minister of Reconstruction in Thaci's PGOK.

¶4. (C) Upon his return to Kosovo after the war, Krasniqi joined several discontented KLA leaders, including current Macedonia Albanian politician Bardhyl Mahmuti and PDK presidency member Azem Sylja, to briefly challenge Thaci's political preeminence in the former KLA spectrum by forming a party of their own, the Party of Democratic Union (PBD). Thaci eventually integrated the PBD into the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) he formed in October 1999, with Krasniqi becoming the party's secretary-general, a post in which he has been reconfirmed three times. As the party's general manager, he wields great power within the PDK and has not shied away from occasionally defying Thaci's primacy on major political issues.

STRIDENT NATIONALIST RHETORIC

¶5. (C) Krasniqi's postwar public and political engagement failed to build on his constructive role at Rambouillet. Either as a party or government official - he served as minister of public services in the government of Bajram Rexhepi during 2002-2004 - Krasniqi has often employed harsh and strident rhetoric, primarily targeting the PDK's political archrival LDK, and UNMIK, especially the latter's law enforcement policies and actions. Some examples include his claim that the voters "killed the nation's martyrs once

PRISTINA 00000014 002 OF 002

again" after the PDK's landmark defeat to the LDK in the 2000 municipal elections, or his branding of UNMIK trials of former KLA members on war-related charges & a crime directed against the future of Kosovo.⁸ A series of acrimonious and provocative statements he made during a three-week stint as acting PM in August 2003 prompted UNMIK to respond by claiming that Kosovo had created its own version of the British & silly season.⁸ Krasniqi's behavior was particularly noxious during the March 2004 riots, which he publicly described as a result of legitimate popular dissatisfaction with UNMIK's anti-Albanian policies.

¶6. (C) Krasniqi has toned down his anti-UNMIK rhetoric more recently, but has continued with acerbic statements against the previous LDK-AAK governing coalition in his capacity as PDK caucus leader from 2004-2007. Nevertheless, he participated constructively in the Unity Team's Political-Strategic Group, tasked with policy preparations for the final status process. Still, he has reverted on occasion to his favorite theme of Albanian national unification which had caused him significant political backlash since his first interviews as KLA spokesman. In a recent editorial headlined "Albania is One," Krasniqi lamented the denial of national unification to Albanians and asserted that such an aspiration was neither a mistake nor inappropriate.

¶7. (SBU) Krasniqi was born on January 1, 1951, in the village of Negrovac near Glogovac/Glogovac. He has bachelor's and master's degrees in history from the University of Pristina. Krasniqi was married in 1991 after being released from prison, and has three daughters and a son. He does not speak English.

¶8. (C) Comment: Krasniqi is a mixed bag: a rhetorical firebrand who has despite his more strident political assertions been able to work productively with other representatives in the Unity Team and lead the PDK Assembly caucus in a manner that avoided boycott or other disruptive tactics. USOP has generally had good relations with Krasniqi, chiding him after several rhetorical excesses and

succeeding in subduing his commentary. We can expect that he will be a more politicized Assembly speaker than the last incumbent, the somnolent Kole Berisha, and potentially more divisive -- a concern that almost led PDK leader Thaci to pass him over for the Speaker position in favor of younger candidate Hajredin Kuci. Krasniqi's standing in the party, however, and his desire for the seat, made it almost inevitable that he would win the position. USOP intends to work closely with Krasniqi to remind him of the Assembly's unique and powerful role in Ahtisaari implementation and the declaration of independence itself, and to provide him as much guidance as possible on all these endeavors. End comment.

KAIDANOW